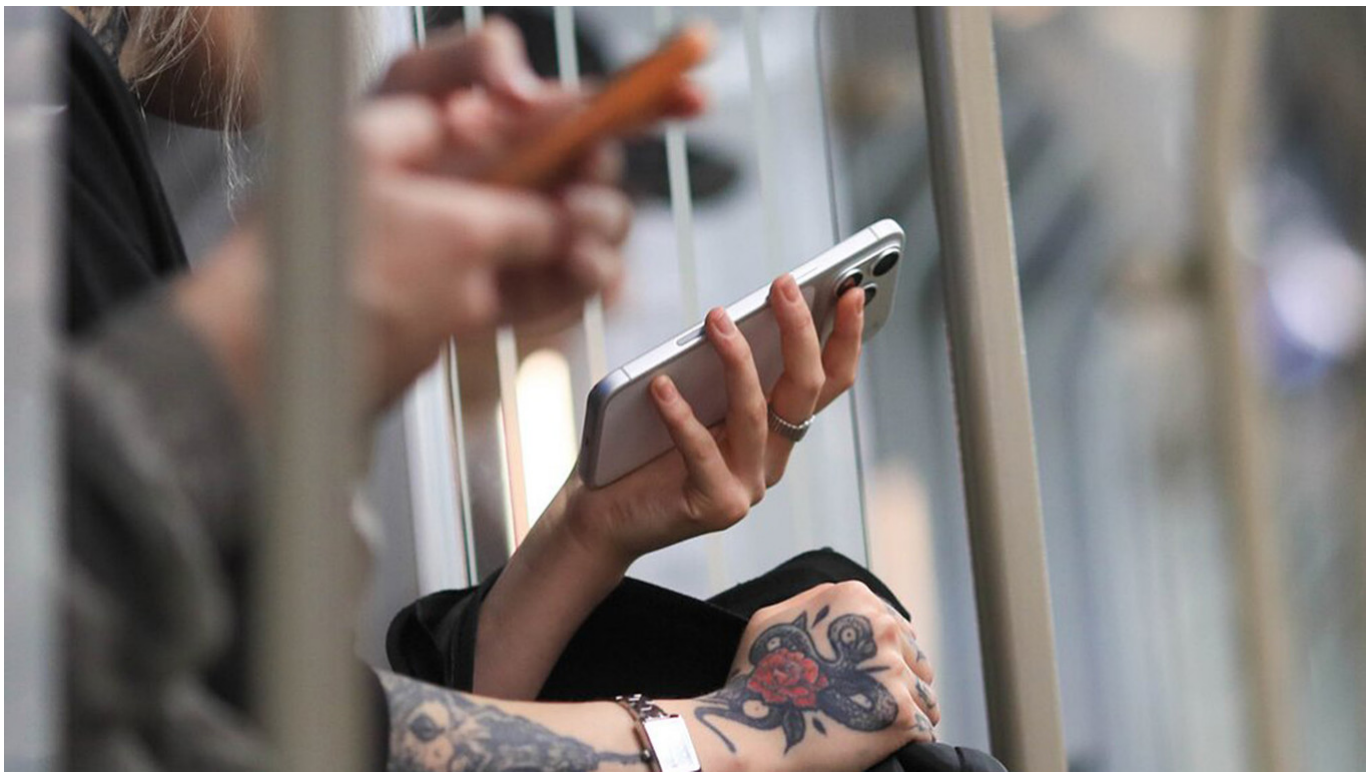
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Apple Removes Kremlin-Backed Messaging App Max From App Store

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Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency

Apple has removed Russia's state-backed messaging app Max from its App Store and cut off push notifications for calls and messages to iPhone users.

Launched in spring 2025 as a domestic alternative to WhatsApp and Telegram, Max has been heavily promoted by authorities as a secure platform and is legally mandated to come pre-installed on all smartphones and computers sold in Russia.

"Max confirms that its app is currently unavailable in the App Store," the company's press service told the state-run news agency TASS on Wednesday.

The platform later said that the removal means iPhone users will no longer receive alerts for new messages and calls. "We recommend opening the app manually from time to time so you don't miss any important messages," Max advised its users, adding that its internal features otherwise remain fully functional.

The company said it has reached out to Apple to resolve the issue and advised users to download the messenger from alternative app stores or directly from Max's official website.

Apple later told BBC News Russian that it deleted Max from its App Store in order to comply with sanctions, but it did not specify which sanctions. The company did not respond to a request for comment sent by The Moscow Times.

Related article: Everything You Need to Know About Max, Russia's State-Backed Answer to WhatsApp

Digital Development Minister Maksut Shadayev accused Apple of restricting access to Max for more than 20 million Russian iPhone users without providing an explanation.

Before the App Store removal, global web infrastructure service Cloudflare briefly flagged Max as malicious spyware. Max developers blamed the spyware label on a misunderstanding of standard web analytics code.

Russia blocked access to Cloudflare last year, and earlier this week, the FSB security service accused Cloudflare and another major web service, Fastly, of helping Western intelligence agencies spy on high-ranking Russian officials through their iPhones.

The removal also follows political pressure from Russia's exiled opposition. In February, opposition figure Yulia Navalnaya launched an anti-censorship campaign that specifically included lobbying Google and Apple to remove Max from their global app stores.

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